

**COMMUNITY SERVICES
DEPARTMENT**



M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: November 2, 2011

TO: Terri Briere, Council President
Members of Renton City Council

VIA: Denis Law, Mayor

FROM: Terry Higashiyama, Community Services Administrator

STAFF CONTACT: Karen Bergsvik, Human Services Manager, Ext. 6652

SUBJECT: **Cold Weather Shelter**

ISSUE:

Should the City of Renton have a cold weather shelter, which will house the homeless during severe weather conditions?

RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize the Mayor to execute the two proposed Memorandums of Understanding.

BACKGROUND SUMMARY:

There is no place in Renton for homeless families and individuals to go at night, when it is very cold and/or snowing. The demand for shelter beds in South King County far exceeds the number of beds available – and in Renton there are no emergency family shelters or a place where single women can go. The number of homeless is projected to increase Statewide with the cuts in state benefits.¹ It is estimated that the number of homeless will increase by 2300 people in 2012, and may increase by more than 21,000 people in 2014 if the document recording fee is not renewed.² At least 252 families were classified as homeless by the Renton School District in 2010.

¹ General Assistance, Temporary Aid to Needy Families and Disability Lifeline are cutting cash payments to people served by homeless programs.

² Critical state and local programs are funded by revenue from a real estate document recording fee. In 2009, the Washington Legislature temporarily increased the original document recording fee of \$10 to \$30 through 2012, which is used for emergency shelter, homeless prevention, and the transitional housing operating and rent program (THOR). The Legislature has to extend or reauthorize the additional \$20 or it will expire. If it expires, there will be major cuts to programs that serve the homeless and the number of homeless is expected to increase.

Renton needs a cold weather/severe weather shelter that is triggered by the weather – as opposed to emergency shelters that are triggered by either local or regional emergencies. The shelter would open when outside temperatures reach 32 degrees Fahrenheit for 24 or more consecutive hours, when snow has or is expected to exceed three inches in depth, or when other conditions are severe enough to present a substantial threat to life or health of persons.

This shelter would operate from November to March. Harambee Church has volunteered their church to be the site for this shelter. Tentatively it would be open at 8pm and close at 7am. This will be an extension of the homeless meal program they serve on Saturday night. They will provide the space, prepare meals, help recruit volunteers, and work with Catholic Community Services. Catholic Community Services has agreed to oversee the shelter; they will do the initial screening of guests, and provide staff to stay at the shelter overnight. They operate similar shelters for the cities of Kent and Bellevue. They also oversee the ARISE program in Renton. The City will provide the funding, cots and blankets (those currently at Renton Community Center for emergencies), make the determination as to when the shelter will open, transport the cots and blankets to the shelter, and let the public/homeless know the shelter is open. A total of \$10,000 was budgeted for this in 2011/2012.

CONCLUSION

This shelter will meet a community need, using existing community agencies and resources. It is a partnership and collaboration. Signing these Memorandums of Understanding will allow it to happen.

cc: Jay Covington, Chief Administrative Officer
Larry Warren, City Attorney
Garmon Newson, Assistant City Attorney
Iwen Wang, Administrator Finance/IS